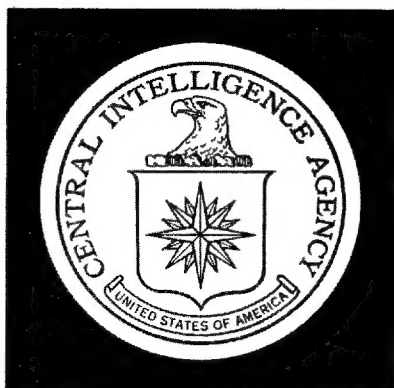


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DIRECTORATE OF
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MEMORANDUM

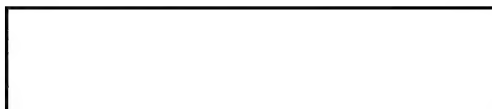
The Situation in Vietnam

State Department review completed

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Information as of 1600
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HIGHLIGHTS

US aircraft encountered extremely dense air defenses in raids against industrial and military targets at Hanoi and Haiphong on 25 April. Four US aircraft were lost.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
Several Communist rice caches, a claymore mine factory, and a base camp have been discovered and destroyed by elements of the 17-battalion Operation MANHATTAN currently sweeping Binh Duong Province (Paras. 1-2).

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The Viet Cong have been experiencing considerable difficulties in Chau Doc Province resulting from economic problems, the Chieu Hoi Program, and air strikes (Paras. 5-10). The Viet Cong may be planning a coordinated attack with NVA units against Hue and Thua Thien Province (Para. 11).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:
Behind the scenes infighting in the Constituent Assembly over the draft electoral laws reflects divided sentiments toward civilian and military candidates for president (Para. 1). The fourth Sunday of local elections brought a reduced turnout, but no upsurge in Viet Cong activity (Para. 2). Tran Quoc Buu was re-elected to head the Vietnamese Confederation of Labor (Para. 3).

III. Military Developments in North Vietnam:
US planes raided industrial and military targets in the Hanoi-Haiphong area; four US aircraft were lost (Paras. 1-3).

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V. Communist Political Developments: [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Hanoi's celebration of Lenin's birthday reflects the current warm attitude in Soviet-DRV relations (Paras. 3-4). Peking commentary on the US strikes on targets near Hanoi and Haiphong appears to be similar to Hanoi's (Para. 5).

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Forces associated with the 17-battalion allied search-and-destroy Operation MANHATTAN, currently sweeping an area of Binh Duong Province northwest of Phu Cuong, have located several enemy rice caches and logistical areas. More than 52,000 pounds of rice--including locally produced rice and at least ten tons of rice in US-marked 100-pound bags--were found on 24 and 25 April. Most of the captured rice will be evacuated; the rest will be destroyed.

2. In the same general area on 24 April, a claymore mine factory--complete with 200 pounds of TNT--and an enemy base camp were discovered and subsequently destroyed. Operation MANHATTAN, which began on 22 April, is designed to seek out Communist troops, base camps, and supply and storage areas in Binh Duong Province. So far, light skirmishes have resulted in 13 Viet Cong killed compared with four Americans killed and 34 wounded.



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Viet Cong Difficulties in Chau Doc Province

5. There are indications that Viet Cong forces in the Mekong Delta province of Chau Doc are experiencing considerable difficulty as a result of the government's Chieu Hoi program and stepped-up aerial harassment of Communist base areas. In addition, the Viet Cong are having economic troubles, caused in part by the October-November 1966 floods which damaged an estimated 40 to 60 percent of the Chau Doc rice crop.

6.

[redacted] the Communists are moving their main force troops out of Chau Doc into "safe haven" bases in Cambodia. They are reportedly leaving only enough cadre to support political organizations and finance sections.

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7. In a strict military sense, the Viet Cong have not been powerful in Chau Doc Province for over a year. Only one main force Viet Cong battalion has been operating in the province on a regular basis, although another battalion is reported to enter occasionally from Cambodia. Except for the mountainous area of Tri Ton District, Viet Cong military tactics have been confined to harassing outposts, sniping at GVN forces, and setting mines.

8. Last fall's damaged rice crop and a general rise in prices have caused the Viet Cong in Chau Doc to take some emergency measures in recent months.

[redacted] the Communists have become increasingly dependent on "Self-Reliance" units within their military components. These groups support the main force Viet Cong troops and guerrillas by working as farmers or laborers.

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9. Also, in the relatively few areas of the province which the Viet Cong control, the VC reportedly have taken over the exploitation of canals and ponds as fisheries. Local villagers contribute the

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labor for these enterprises, but they have been told that the Viet Cong must "borrow" the profits for one year. As yet, there have been no reports of villagers resisting these emergency measures.

10. It has been reported that all of the Viet Cong district committees in Chau Doc Province (and some district committees in neighboring provinces) have been reprimanded by higher authority for falling off in their tax collections. Another reported result of these Communist difficulties is that the Viet Cong regional headquarters in this area will have to provide Chau Doc with an increased subsidy this year.

Further Evidence of Viet Cong Plans to Attack Hue Revealed

11. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] some type of attack against the town of Hue may be imminent, possibly to be coordinated with strikes against district offices, allied military positions, police posts, and jails. Many of these reports may reflect rumors deliberately planted by the enemy in order to intimidate the population. Nevertheless, the Communists have the capability to carry out at least small-scale guerrilla-type attacks against selected targets in and near Hue, and it is possible that such efforts will be mounted in the near future.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. The Constituent Assembly is scheduled to begin deliberations on the national electoral laws this week. The election law drafting committee reportedly has been divided into three subcommittees to draft respectively the presidential, upper house, and lower house election regulations. Within the subcommittee responsible for drafting the presidential electoral law, according to several deputies, supporters of the southern civilian candidates and supporters of the potential military candidate have been waging a major battle over whether to provide for a run-off election between the two candidates with the largest pluralities. Although six of the subcommittee members who echo the military view oppose the provision, the subcommittee as a whole has temporarily agreed to accept the principle of a run-off if no candidate receives more than 35 percent of the vote. The six-man group, led by Premier Ky's supporter Le Phuoc Sang, is reportedly determined to block the provision on the floor of the assembly.

Local Elections

2. Voter turnout for the fourth Sunday of local elections was lower than on the previous three voting days, primarily because of a poor response in Gia Dinh Province which surrounds Saigon. Gia Dinh's low turnout, only 49 percent of some 366,000 registered voters, may have been a result of the province chief's desire to exercise more control over the outcome and his decision not to press an active campaign and a consequently larger voter turnout.

3. In the latest balloting, councils were elected in 185 villages. Viet Cong activity was characterized by the US Embassy as light. At least one candidate was assassinated--possibly by a poisoned arrow--raising to 10 the number of candidates killed for the four Sundays of voting so far.

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Labor Congress

4. On 23 April, the closing day of the national congress of the Vietnamese Confederation of Labor (CVT), Tran`Quoc Buu and the other key leaders on the 21-man executive board were re-elected to office. The CVT endorsed the Buddhist proposal for a 24-hour cease-fire on 23 May; a cease-fire has also been officially proclaimed by the government. The CVT did not endorse a cease-fire for 1 May, international labor day, which had been proposed by one of the rival non-CVT unions.

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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. For the second consecutive day, North Vietnam's air defense system on 25 April downed four attacking planes as US Navy and Air Force aircraft struck major industrial and military targets at Hanoi and Haiphong. Surface-to-air missile units were responsible for bringing down two of the planes, an air force F-105 and a navy A-4, while AAA fire and a MIG-17 accounted for two other A-4s. Two MIG-17s may have been damaged by a navy F-8 and a USAF F-105.

2. No bomb damage assessment is yet available on the attacks of 25 April which included the DRV's largest transformer and switching station and its principal railroad car repair facility at Hanoi. At Haiphong, North Vietnam's only cement plant, the city's major ammunition supply depot, and the POL facility last struck in July 1966 were all hit by planes from three US aircraft carriers.

3. Pilots on all five strikes reported that DRV fighter, missile, and antiaircraft artillery units were extremely active and aggressive, as they had been on the previous day's raids against the Hoa Lac and Kep airfields.

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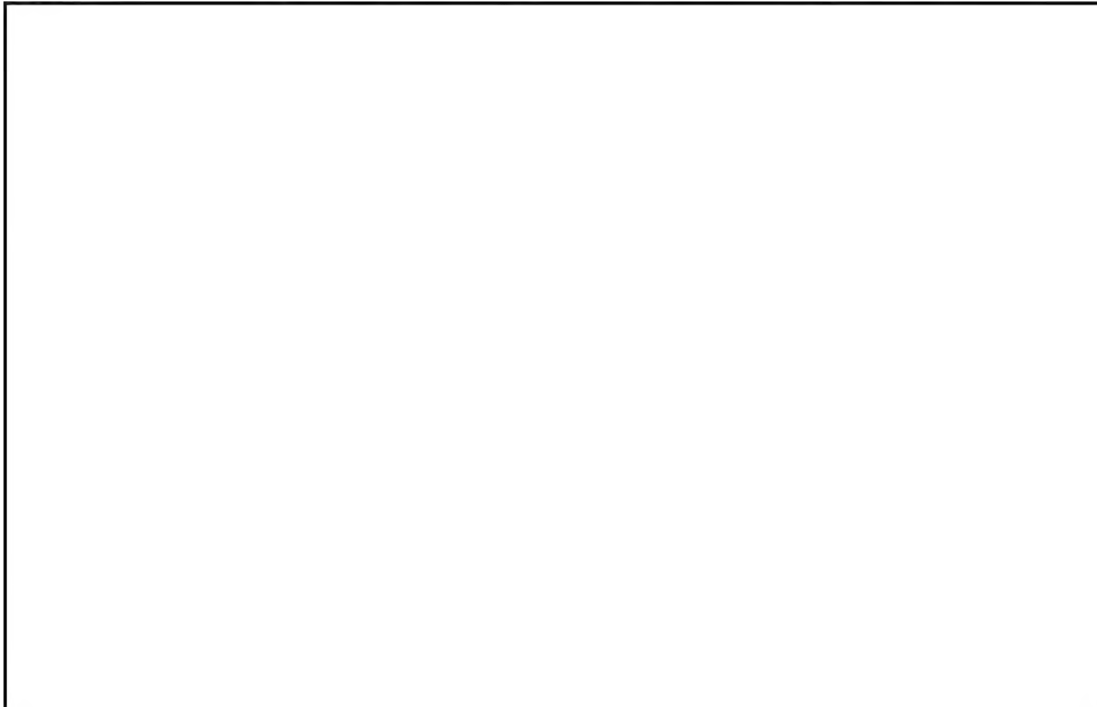
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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

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Hanoi Celebrates Lenin's Birthday

3. North Vietnam's observance of Lenin's birthday this year was in keeping with the warm attitude currently being displayed by Hanoi toward the Soviets. Hanoi also called recently for the entire population to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the October Revolution. The Lenin birthday observance in Hanoi this year was marked by the appearance of politburo member Truong Chinh in contrast to the relatively low-level figures present in previous years. In addition, the speeches and propaganda surrounding the event were slightly more warmly worded than those of last year.

4. These gestures by Hanoi are, however, more of degree than of substance and are well within the DRV's carefully preserved position of balance between China and the USSR. Chinese-DRV relations, however, have been somewhat strained in recent months because of Peking's negative attitude toward Hanoi's recent statements on the possibility of talks with the US.

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Peking Commentary on Air Strikes

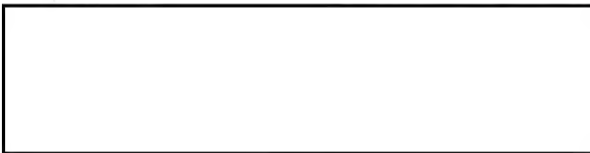
5. On 25 April, after a delay of several days, Peking made its first significant comment on the recent US air attacks against targets near Hanoi and Haiphong. A Chinese Foreign Ministry statement condemned the raids and repeated Peking's long-standing pledge to support the Vietnamese in their struggle against the US. Although the full text of the statement is not yet available, it appears to be similar to the DRV Foreign Ministry statement on the raids. Neither Peking nor Hanoi has yet publicly acknowledged the US air strikes against the DRV air bases.

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